

BEYOND THE EXHIBITS

North Carolina Museum of History

World War II Spy Master

How do you keep a secret? Don't tell anyone!—But what if you need to send a message safely from here to there? Codes and ciphers can help. During World War II kids learned about their use in comic books, books, radio, and movies. Many started playing "spy games" of their own. Now you can join in!

Some definitions to start:

CODE: a system in which a symbol = one word (for example, # = car)

CIPHER: a system in which a symbol = one letter (for example, 5 = A)

DEAD DROP: a secret location where messages can be left and picked up.

1) Look online for some simple codes and/or ciphers to use. We like the below cipher to start off with:

A=Z
B=Y
C=X
D=W
E=V
F=U
G=T
H=S
I=R

J=Q
K=P
L=O
M=N
N=M
O=L
P=K
Q=J
R=I

S=H
T=G
U=F
V=E
W=D
X=C
Y=B
Z=A

2) Scout out 5-10 dead drop sites in your house--choose places in which you can hide a small piece of paper!

3) Using one of your codes or ciphers, encode or encipher clues that will lead your fellow player or players to the dead drops--one clue leading to the next.

Example:

Clue 1 (handed to player): CLOSET COAT POCKET

Clue 2 (in coat pocket): WASH YOUR HANDS

Clue 3 (in sink): TABLE AND CHAIRS

etc.!

Take turns being the code/cipher master and the hunter. How tricky can your clues get?!